pour yourself into my cracks (we can be whole together)
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pour yourself into my cracks (we can be whole together)

by thelikesofus

Summary

“You should know better than to leave your door unlocked at night,” Jack says in lieu of a greeting as he toes off his shoes in Robby’s entryway, probably arriving no more than twenty minutes after Robby.

“Figured you wouldn’t be far behind me. You never know when to leave well enough alone.” Robby replies from the kitchen.

OR

At the end of the Pitt Fest Nightmare Shift, Jack follows Robby home. They fall apart and fall together once more.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Jack watches Robby's retreating back and digs his nails into the knee of his trousers, willing himself not to follow him. They don't do that anymore, not after things crashed and burned last time. When things got too real too quickly, when Robby pushed and Jack retreated and they reached a bitter stalemate, which resulted in the admittance that they were better off friends, colleagues, brothers in arms on the front line of battle, defending them and theirs in The Pitt. The bees protecting the hive.

It's been a long day, though, and old urges are harder to push down. That part of Jack that was always trying to toe over the line, that wanted to give everything over to Robby but was scared of how deep that well might go and that he might drown in it if he can't climb back out again.

"'Nother one for you, Dr. Abbot?" Donnie's question pulls Jack's attention back to the group. The nurse already has a beer can poised and ready to throw to him, but Jack shakes his head and busies himself with reattaching his prosthesis.

If he drinks anymore, he might do something stupid like follow Robby home.

If he drinks anymore, he might do something stupid like let Robby go home alone.

"Think I'll call it a night, too. You kids have fun."

"You know we will." Princess quips and Jack squeezes her shoulder as he passes her.

"That's my girl." He winks, and she grins. He salutes the rest of them and lets his weary bones follow their well-known path through the park in the direction of Robby's apartment.

"You should know better than to leave your door unlocked at night," Jack says in lieu of a greeting as he takes off his shoes in Robby's entryway, probably arriving no more than twenty minutes after Robby.

"Figured you wouldn't be far behind me. You never know when to leave well enough alone." Robby replies from the kitchen.

Jack gives him a rueful smile when he joins him in the dull yellow light. "You and I have very different definitions of *well* , brother."

Robby just hums and starts pulling mugs from the cupboard. “Tea?”

“Please. Thanks.” Jack leaves him to the methodical process of pouring and brewing, and removing the teabags, and waits for Robby to join him at the kitchen table. He thanks him again when he passes Jack his usual pale blue mug. There’s a matching one in the cupboard at his own apartment, freebies from some medical expo they both attended back in ‘09.

They sip in companionable silence for a while, and Jack toys with the edge of his coaster absently.

“Dana wants to quit,” Robby says without looking up from his tea. Jack would suspect him of reading futures or fortunes on the dregs of leaves in the bottom of his cup if he didn't know that Robby strictly brought tea bags and not loose leaf because he couldn’t stand the gritty texture of the leaves.

“Do you think she will?” He asks.

“Maybe,” Robby replies, leaning back in his chair and scraping his hands up his face and around the back of his head. “She’s entertained the notion before, more than once, but I think she might be serious this time.”

“That chairs guy really did a number on her.”

“Yeah, she was pretty shaken when it first happened.” Robby agrees.

Jack leans his elbows on the table. “She’s a trooper, though. She's part of the DNA of that place, she’ll come around.”

“God, I hope so.” Robby sighs, leaning on the table in a mirror of Jack’s posture. “I don’t know what we’d do without her—what I’d do.”

Jack leans a little more and risks reaching out his hand to cover Robby’s, where it’s found its way back to his mug. The back of his hand is warm, the familiar veins, fine bones, and the ridges of his knuckles brush along Jack’s palm. Toeing the line.

“You’re not thinking of following her over the wall, are you?”

Robby huffs a laugh through his nose and slides his other hand around the top of his mug and over Jack’s wrist to sandwich his hand between both of his own. “Then I really wouldn’t know what to do with myself.” He says.

“You know, I wanted to be a Firefighter when I was a kid,” Jack says.

Robby finally looks up, surprise written on his face. “Why didn’t you?”

“Dunno really. It was always more of a fantasy than a real aspiration.” Jack lets the warmth of Robby’s hands seep into his. “Pretty dangerous job, too.”

“So you went to war.” Robby gives him a pointed look.

“So I went to war.”

They don’t talk about Jack’s time in the service. Not often anyway. Robby knows that Jack has his reasons and not just the ones related to why he was honourably discharged, up a medal but down a leg.

“I wanted to be a librarian,” Robby admits, and Jack has visions of Robby in a sweater vest with his glasses hanging off the end of his nose. It’s a nice thought, he’ll revisit them later.

“Makes sense, you always have your nose in a book.” He says. “That’s a pretty dangerous job, too.”

Robby raises an eyebrow at him.

“High risk of paper cuts.”

“Right.” Robby scoffs and lets go of Jack’s hand, collecting both of their mugs and depositing them in the sink. He doesn’t bother to wash them, and Jack tries not to let that bother him. He likes a tidy house before he goes to bed, leaving a fresh start for a new day.

“When do you go back in?” Robby asks with his back still to Jack.

“Sunday night,” Jack says. Part of him is dreading it, while the other part is itching to get back into the fray. “You?”

“Monday morning. Though I’m sure Gloria will ask me in sooner to do incident reports.”

“Fuck Gloria. Seriously.” Jack stands to lean against the bench. “She can do the incident reports herself.”

“It’s part of my job, Jack. I can’t avoid it forever.”

“No, but surely she can make a start on it herself until you’re back on your regularly scheduled shift rotation.” Jack follows Robby from the

kitchen to the dimly lit hallway.

Robby glances over his shoulder. “Incident reporting has to be filed within forty-eight hours of the event. Look, I’m tired, Jack, can we not argue about this, please?”

“Then let it wait till Sunday at least. You can come in with me.”

Robby’s shoulders sag, and he pinches the bridge of his nose. “Do I get a choice?”

“Nope.” Jack shrugs. “I’m setting up camp in your living room. I will know if you try to leave.”

“Please don’t sleep on my couch,” Robby says in a pained whisper, and for a moment, Jack’s stomach seizes, thinking that Robby is sending him away, before he realizes what he’s really asking.

They haven’t done this in a long time either—not since before they were both attendings, not since that one night that they got too drunk and both crossed that unspoken line just one more time. When it was Robby’s turn to get scared and Jack’s walls went up, and they both put another box labeled DO NOT TOUCH in their respective closets. One in the bedroom, one on the couch. Together but apart.

“Jack,” Robby says again. “Please.”

He stands in the doorway to the bedroom—illuminated by the lamp behind him, his hair sticking straight up from running his fingers through it, a wild look in his eyes. The lamp casts a halo, a violent juxtaposition between the peace they have always found in each other and the war that rages inside them.

Jack picks at the tape holding the box shut and takes a step towards him. This could be a terrible idea—or it could be the thing that saves them both.

Robby’s shoulders hitch, and Jack is at his side in an instant, one hand around the back of his neck, guiding his face into Jack’s shoulder and sliding his other hand around Robby’s side to slot his fingers into the grooves between his ribs.

“I’ve got you. Just breathe.” Jack presses into the shell of his ear as Robby shatters against him, his fingers fisted tightly in the back of Jack’s scrub shirt. “Deep breaths. Grief leaving the body, yeah?”

Robby chuckles, his voice thick and wet, but his breath warm against Jack's neck. "Yeah, something like that."

"Come 'ere," Jack says and pulls Robby fully into his arms, wrapping himself around him like a boa constrictor. Robby does the same, burying his nose in Jack's neck and sighing heavily. "You need sleep. It won't all feel so horrible in the morning."

Jack's leg aches, and he's sure Robby's back does too. He digs he knuckles of his left hand into the knobs at the base of Robby's spine and the other man groans.

"Have you showered?"

Robby nods

"Okay. Go brush your teeth." Jack knows that what Robby needs now are instructions, clear steps to follow without having to think about it. "I'm going to steal something to sleep in."

Robby pulls away with a nod. "Bottom drawer, you know where."

Jack does know, and it hurts a little that that drawer used to be home to almost as many of his shirts as Robby's. Another little barrier they subconsciously put in place. Borrowing clothes from time to time felt less incriminating than keeping their own effects at each other's apartments.

He pats a hand against Robby's chest and pushes towards the bathroom. In the drawer, he finds an old t-shirt, stretched around the collar and thin under the arms—perfect—and a pair of pajama shorts that look close enough to Jack's size.

He's halfway through pulling the sock lining from his prosthesis down his leg when Robby comes back from the bathroom and perches himself on the bed next to Jack, stretching his hands out towards him in offering.

"It's okay, I've got it."

"Jack, please." Robby's eyes are wide and brown and pleading like he needs to help Jack just as much as he wants to. Robby's hands were made for helping people, it's so intrinsically tied into his very being and bleeds into every part of his life, not just work. And taking care of Jack is something that Robby has made his personal responsibility since they met, or at least since they gave up on the passive-aggressive

rivalry they started med school with. It's different now, less about making sure Jack doesn't drink his weight in coffee to get through exams and more making sure he remembered to eat during his shift, tracking how long he's been on his prosthesis without taking breaks and coaxing him down off the roof—though apparently that's become a mutual mission now.

Jack leans back and shuffles to allow Robby room to roll the sock the rest of the way down Jack's shin and lift his stump into his lap. Deft fingers find the tender points and where to press just enough to ease the ache. Taking something for himself, Jack flops back against the mattress and closes his eyes, letting his bones go loose as Robby works his way up to his knee and around the joint.

"You doing okay?" Robby asks just above a whisper. Jack cracks open one eye to squint at him, taking in the concentration pinched in his brow and the way the lamp casts heavy shadows along the other man's cheekbones.

"Shouldn't I be asking you that?"

Robby shrugs. "Maybe. Doesn't mean you can avoid the question, though."

He pinches the soft skin in the back of Jack's knee, and Jack sits up with a groan, pulling his leg out of Robby's lap. "I'm—, okay. Somehow both better and worse than this morning, or yesterday morning, I suppose."

Robby nods, like that makes sense.

Jack swings his legs over the side of the bed and glances curiously around the room. "I'm gonna go rinse off, where are you're—?"

Robby cuts him off with a hand on his shoulder, already standing from the bed and walking away. "I'll grab them, hang on."

The spare crutches do actually belong to Robby, or at least they did six years ago when Robby tripped on a gurney while walking backwards through the ER and fractured his ankle. Watching Robby fall on his ass had been the highlight of Jack's week at the time but unsurprisingly Robby made a terrible patient and so they had both been just as glad when he got the all clear from ortho to walk on his foot normally again. The crutches stayed, though.

"Here." Robby passes him the crutches and watches carefully as Jack

leverages himself upright, not helping—Jack doesn't want that—but there, which he does.

In the bathroom, there's a collapsible shower stool behind the door and a spare toothbrush sitting next to the sink. Green handle—Jack's favourite colour.

He makes a perfunctory job and rinsing and scrubbing the day off his body and then sits on the stool and watches it spiral down the drain until his fingers turn pruney.

Robby is still awake—barely—when Jack returns to the room, sitting up against the headboard with his glasses perched on the end of his nose and a book nestled in his lap. Jack can't read the cover from the doorway but expects it's a memoir or biography. Robby likes those and doesn't tend to read a lot of fiction. He prefers to lose himself in the details of someone else's life rather than focus too closely on his own. Jack is partial to sci-fi, the kind of decades-old mass market paperbacks he can get for a dollar at the second-hand book store on the corner near his apartment. Their spines are already pre-cracked, and the pages dog-eared by other people's fingers. Jack has lived enough lives of his own. If he's looking for an escape, he's going to find it on another planet.

"You're lurking," Robby says without looking up.

"Just admiring the view." Jack retorts, and Robby snorts, finally putting his book to the side.

"Oh, really?"

"Yeah, those eye bags are impressive."

That finally gets a laugh out of him. "Asshole. Get over here, you're making the room look untidy."

Jack pointedly kicks his way past where Robby's trainers are strewn across the carpet and his work backpack dumped unceremoniously on the floor. Robby pulls back the covers, and Jack plops himself on the edge of the bed, sliding his arms out of the cuffs on the crutches, leaning them against the wall by the bed, and shuffling his way under the covers until he and Robby are lying next to each other. A car horn honks outside the window, and Robby flinches and then sighs, burying his nose in the pillow and letting out a deep breath. Jack just grits his teeth at the sudden noise and watches him quietly.

“Talk to me, man.” Jack prompts, and Robby sighs, rolling onto his back and staring at the ceiling.

“I knew today was going to suck but I hoped—. I thought—, it’s been four years.”

“And? Adamson died, Robby. Don’t give me some crap about how you think you should have got over that or be better by now. Just because it’s been *four* years? *Time heals all wounds* is bullshit, does it look like I have two legs again?”

“Jack, that's—.”

“Different? Look I’ve sung my therapist’s praises enough for one night but healing isn’t linear man and some days just suck. You don’t have to try and prove anything to anyone.”

Robby’s head lolls to the side, scanning Jack’s face slowly.

“I feel terrible,” He pauses to swallow. “For being kind of grateful that the day sucked everyone else too. It was a good distraction.”

Jack barely suppresses a laugh. “You cynical bastard.”

Then Robby’s shoulders are shaking, and he’s curling in on himself. Jack catches him by the shoulder before he can roll the other way and turns Robby towards him, his hand sliding up to cup the other man's cheek and scratching at his beard and around the shell of his ear.

Robby lunges forward, and Jack draws him in, tucking Robby’s nose against his sternum and threading his fingers into the shorter hair at the back of his head. Holding him close and letting him fall apart. He’s missed holding him, the familiar weight of his body against Jack’s, the sound of his breathing, and the smell of his shampoo lingering longer than the waft he gets when Robby pulls him in and then out of a friendly hug.

“I don’t know what else I could have done to save her.” Robby sobs, and Jack holds tighter.

“Nothing.” He promises. “She was already gone, man. You know that. We all did. We are not miracle workers, Jake knows that too.”

Jack buries his nose in Robby’s hair, his heart breaking for Robby, for Jake, for all the families and the friends of the people they couldn’t save and of the ones they could, but whose lives will never be the

same anyway.

Robby pulls back, and Jack doesn't realize he's crying too until Robby's hand lands on his cheek, the rough edge of his thumb stroking under Jack's eye, brushing the tears away.

"We're gonna be okay," Robby says or asks. It's hard to tell who he's trying to reassure.

Jack's hand finds its way to Robby's scruffy cheek again, and his toe finds its way over that line. "Yeah, baby, always."

Robby's eyes scan Jack's face for a moment, an eternity, a breath, and then he leans forward to press his lips to Jack's, and it feels like coming home. For the first time all day, Jack feels like he can breathe easily, and Robby is all around him.

They move in tandem, drawing each other closer, limbs slotting together like puzzle pieces as they fall into the familiar motion of drawing breath from each other's lungs.

When they pull back, lips swollen and chests heaving, Jack's upper lip proudly wearing the evidence of Robby's mustache, they lean their foreheads together and breathe.

When his heart stops racing, Jack rearranges them so that Robby's head rests on his chest and Jack can wrap his arms tightly around the other man's broad shoulders, his fingers scratching up and over the back of his head and neck as Robby's fingers clutch the material of Jack's borrowed t-shirt.

"I'm so tired," Robby whispers.

"I know," Jack says, kissing the crown of his head. "Go to sleep, we'll talk about this in the morning."

"Hmm," Robby hums and lifts his hands to rub up Jack's sternum and along the edge of his collarbone. "Yeah, we've got time."

His words are a balm to the soul and music to Jack's ears.

End Notes

This show, am I right? These old men...!!!

I don't have any coherent thoughts left, so please accept this as my first contribution to The Pitt fandom.

Comments and Kudos fuel my delusions <3

This fic is rebloggable on Tumblr.

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Much love,
Meegs xx

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